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A String of Pearls

by Jessica Dixon

The noose fits my neck like a choker made of the finest pearls. &, standing atop the chair in my dressing gown,

I imagine myself a queen at her coronation.

Perhaps the people,
my adoring public,
will ask me to deliver a speech.

If they do,
I'll make it the grandest they have ever heard
before I take my step from my throne.

Already, I can hear them cheer,
not for the witch who burned their town,
for the queen who graced them with
her glory.





Lost is Only a State of Mind

by Ariel Wortham

If ever I get lost –
Don't try to find me.
I'll be lost in my mind, see –
An altogether beautiful and deadly place to be.

Woe to you who undertakes the journey – For while I may be lost here,
I'm still the boss here,
And fear is a wise thing to have, my dear.

A Prayer for Ralph

by Barbara Allan Cates

oh no not again can't have them find the pills another charge and I'm done no future no possibilities no hope blue laser skylight getting closer pulling up no chance to escape visions of sirens a chase maybe a crash red light traffic coming to have to stop. no choice uniform approaching the car could eat them cram 'em in my mouth all at once (just vomit them out later) so no charges okay here they are all in the mouth flashlight in the eyes

step out of the car sir looking intently in my eyes walking the line son we know your record I'm afraid I have to take you downtown back with the hands on with the cuffs his hand on my head i nto the patrol car dark velvety back seat beckons me into just relentin gotta stay awake otta remember to put my finger down my throat blue lights turn no spinning like everything else booked my one phone call mom I'm sorry I love you I never meant to be a disappointment slurring I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I love you

bye

feeling weird into the cell clang alone can't remember what really getting whooooozy eyes won't stay open better lay down on the bunk closing up weird all over can't stay awake maybe just a little nap . mom'll be here soon hope she understands isn't too mad at me eyes are closing more and more weird can't keep my eyes open spinning head won't stay up gotta lay down

now
descending
into
beckoning
nothingness
ma'am I'wm afraid there's been an accident
apparently he took somthing

we are so very

sorry

for

your

Dear Catherine

Hannah Murphy

Dear Catherine,

I still miss you.

I wish I could go back

and protect you.

But all I can do is hope you're ok, and pray that you're safe

Where ever you are.

Sometimes I lay awake at night and think about you,

About how strong you are

And how I hope you're not annoyed by the amount of strength I ask from you.

I still need you.

I look at faces and all I can think is that

They will never be as lovely

Or as beautiful as yours.

I worry for you.

And it makes my heart sink

And my lungs lose capacity.

I wish that I could sit with you

And hold your hands And tell you that you have changed me

And opened my eyes to

The beautiful

Faces of my friends.

I thank you for your patience

And I thank you for your love.

And I will always, always thank you

For trusting me with your story.

I hope that I was good enough.

I hope that you are proud of me.

And I hope this doesn't sound selfish,

But I hope,

Sincerely hope,

That you miss me too.





Ode to Sleep:

By an Overworked College Student Ariel Wortham

> O Sleep, Sleep Thou art Beautiful, Wonderful and Mysterious;

O Sleep, Sleep – That which allows us Restoration and Rejuvenation;

O Sleep, Sleep – Thou art the bringer Of Dreams and new Perspective;

O Sleep, Sleep – Where the hell are you!?



by Miles Calloway

Here awaiting the closing day,
I sit trying to find my way,
through the old gleaming, ancient, distant shores.
The winds above are turning
my heart in my breast is burning,
churning, crying desperate, learning,
learning the harsh reality that doors
once closed, are lost as olden lore's.

Paradise is a mere pleasure, to a man, a hidden treasure, a special shrine, only kept within the glass of time. The place, an empty wooden box, the gold, my memories in locks, the map my withered mind, it mocks. For the chest is empty of rhyme, and reason; the gold no longer shines.

Oh cruel and selfish mistress love, you the heavenly hosts above!
You stole from me in all I believed and had. If this is what love gives to me, nothing but betrayal, pain and misery, I denounce thee, then, trust and piety!
And in my darkness I shall go mad, never my heart, in trust, I clad.

I have changed, for the bad.



by Emily Kinney

Home is where the heart is, Where your family and friends are. Home is what you make it. So, where is mine?

I made one once and it was beautiful.

It was love at first sight.

Green grass and brick buildings,

The neighbors were nice,

Same with the landlords.

They understood me and my brokenness,

Tried to help me, to fix me.

My fractured life felt whole again...

I was home and it was beautiful.

Then it changed.
At first you learn to accept it,

But the neighbors moved and my friends were leaving.
The green grass, now a dirty brown crunch under my feet
And the new owners don't seem to mind it.
I did though.
We watched as the old carpets were pulled up,

Like they were erasing well kept memories and Tearing down walls and concepts.

I cried at the sight. We all cried.

Home is where the heart is, Where your friends and family are. Home is what you make it. So, where is mine?

I had one once and it was beautiful.

The Transplant

Jessica Dixon

I put my heart on a plate

And watched it's palpitations,

Mesmerizws that any such thing could live inside my chest cavity.

The open wound seemed much more likely,

So I stuck my hand into the hole,

Felt the emptiness.

My fist curled to mimic the heart,

The proportions perfect.

But no life spread from my fist,

No warmth from the cold flesh of my hand.

The heart could spread life,

Make me warm,

Send the blood out to explore the farthest reaches of my

Arteries,

Veins,

Capillaries.

The damage had been done, now, though.

My heart drummed out its rhythm on that plate.

I removed my hand,

Tried to cry and found that, Without my heart,

I could not.

The platter in my hand was

Covered in a sticky red liquid which

Coagulated as time passed.

I looked away,

Ashamed.

Then the footsteps came.



I shut my eyes, Afraid of those feet, They grew closer, Until I knew they would trample me. They did not, I held my breath, And the plate left my hand, Replaced by something soft, Alive. No thoughts touched my mind As I lead life to my chest And planted it there, Not daring to remove my hand form that hole. Another hand, A stronger hand, It covered mine, And I smiled.



A girl once flew to Neverland, But she decided to come back-

All Grown Up by Ariel Wortham

She gave up pirates and Indians For papers and indigestion;

Forever young and forever same
For forever growing and forever changing

She gave up flying and fairies
For traffic and suburbia;
Fun and foolishness
For work and seriousness. -

- Did she make the right decision? Is she happy with her choice?

Sometimes she thinks,

If I had the choice to do it over again, I'd -still come back.

I have to grow,
I have to change,

But that doesn't mean I have to stop Believing in all that makes childhood magical.

She reasons with herself.

I have to learn new things

A girl once flew to Neverland,
But she decided to come back I think I made the right choice. . .

Sunday Drive

Barbara Allen Cates

Yellow center-line Morse code divides

journeys

into alternate directions

as comings

and goings

drone onward

to nowhere in particular

plastic daisy windmills stake graveled driveways careening to perilous muddy side ditches marked by red kaleidoscope reflectors and

spin lazily

first in one direction

and

then another

sagging porches house regurgitating sofas

and napping hounds

undisturbed by
the snap
of chalk-white sheets
dried board stiff playing tag with soft patterned quilts and ripple tank t-shirts
in afternoon wind-moods

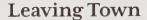
as children shriek hide

and seek
pungent aroma of burning trash
plumes smoke signals airborne

into wispy nothingness black lightning branches silhouette cloud blue horizons and unpruned shrubs huddle against dinghy peeling clapboard as black birds scatter and caw caw caw

intersections marked by lonely blinking traffic signals warn of no one crossing and punctuate the pulsing standstill of time

Sunday drive to nowhere.



by Robin Story

The trunk is heavy with the bags I've packed, with my foot to the floor and no rearview mirror. I have no reason to look behind me anymore, and I must rid myself of any temptations to do so. For sometimes my heart forgets how sad you made it, and it looks for you with desperate hope. It knows you're out there somewhere, getting along just fine without me in your new life. And for the most part, I get along just fine in mine. But this town is stained with memories of us and the broken pieces of me you left behind. I can't take the sudden waves of pain that sting my chest, and cripple me to my knees. Everyone encourages me to find someone else, someone to take me out and treat me better. But at every dinner date,

I look across the table into his eyes and expect yours. I want to laugh about our inside jokes, and feel your familiar arms around me as we say goodnight. But I can't. There is nothing familiar about you anymore. The person I love is no longer there, merely a ghost that haunts me as I die from your selfish ways. So tonight I'm leaving town, and saying goodbye to every piece of this life we lived. I need a fresh start in a new town, where no one knows me well enough to hurt me. Maybe a change of scenery will do me good, and your ghost won't know how to find me here. It's not a guarantee of course, but a maybe is the best I have right now. Better than you at least.



Childish Precaution?

by Ariel Wortham

You laugh at me now Because I'm 20 And I still see monsters In shadows at night.

You laugh at me now Because I'm 20 And I still make sure the doors of my bedroom Are shut and locked securely before I go to bed.

You laugh at me now
Because I'm 20
And I still don't let my feet dangle off the bed
After the lights are out.

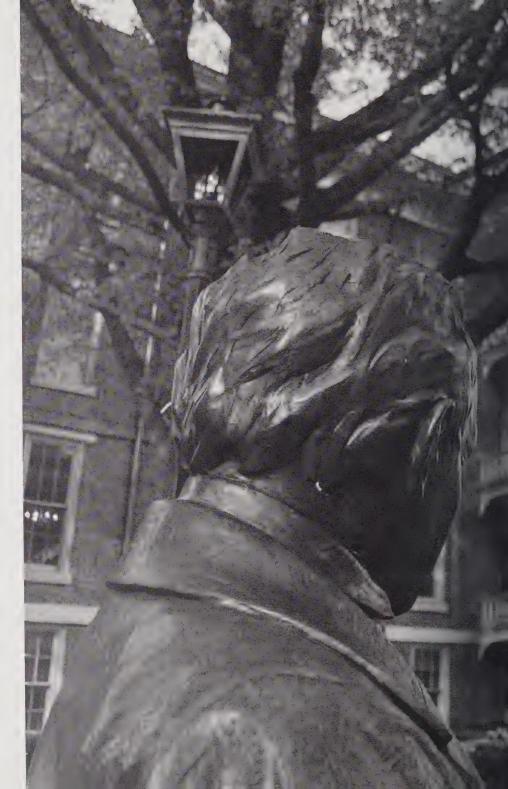
But one of these nights,
While you chuckle at my precautions,
You'll ignore the weird shadow moving against the wall,
You'll dismiss the open closet door,
You'll sit on the edge of the bed after cutting off the lights,
Maybe you're brushing your hair, or picking your nose;

And something will grab you by the ankles –
Something clammy, and scaly, with long fingernails –
But before you can shriek –
the shadow will leap off the wall
And seal your mouth and nose shut
And the last thing you'll see before you suffocate is
A monstrous, misshapen form emerging from your closet.

Then who do you think will be laughing?

Shoes by Sandy Nguyen

I lost a world the other day and until now I was never so unsure. I'd grown accustomed to these wild ways. And all the time I thought of another to blame. In truth I am the only one ashamed. We choose our lessons. We choose our shoes. To walk the wrong way, is a lot more to lose.





Wind Surf

by Barbara Allen Cates

Pea pod shaped pin oak leaf flutters downward tumbled by wind into moving waters cascading over moss-covered rocks topsy turvy leaf waters carrying ladybug navigator clinging for dear life.

The Other Woman

Ariel Wortham

"You think she's finally gone for good?" the man asked.

I finally found the strength to turn her away. She hasn't been back since."

The man looked at the woman sitting across from him. She certainly looked more at peace, sitting demurely with her legs crossed, but relaxed. He had his doubts though; women like the one she claimed to have turned away for good had a way of popping back in, at the most inconvenient of times.

"So," he said, "you and your husband are working together and mending the relationship she broke? Do we need to have another couple's session?"

Shaking her head she replied, "No, I think this needs to be between us. He knows that she was the one bringing all of those people into our house."

"But what about the other men?" he asked.

She blushed and looked ashamed, "We're still working on rebuilding the trust. He knows it wasn't me who wanted them, but he doesn't understand - he didn't understand how difficult it was to fight her once she'd made up her mind."

He nodded, and noted that she had caught herself using present tense when talking about the woman. Habit? Or something else?

"But we're having dinner tonight," she continued. "He's taking me to a nice dinner, and then dancing."

"Good, that will be nice. Rediscovering your relationship will help begin to mend the damage she did."

She nodded and glanced at her watch. "Our hour's up."

"Oh, yes," the woman nodded emphatically, "After that last fiasco, "So it is." He scribbled one last thing on his notepad and added, "I'm going to leave your dosage where it is for now. Until next week then have fun on your date tonight."



She sat at her vanity, hands trembling slightly as she applied her make up. The running water in the bathroom tried to make soothing noises as her husband showered, but she couldn't relax. She was too nervous about her date with him. What if he couldn't forgive her? What if this was the beginning of the end of their relationship? What if he left her? She didn't think she could live if he left her.

If only I were a little more confident, she thought. If only I worried a little less. If only I were more like -

Me? A woman's voice whispered.

She froze, mascara wand hovering before her eyes. Caroline?

Yes?

She sighed with relief. Welcome back.



"Honey?" he called as he emerged from the bathroom.

He looked at his wife, sitting in front of her vanity mirror, putting the finishing touches of red lipstick on.

"Are you ready to go?"

"Oh," she said, tossing curly hair, "I am very ready to go."





A Mensch

by Jessica Dixon

I carry a book in my left shoe.

A pencil,

sharpened down to a nub, hides in my right.

In that book with that pencil,

I track what I hear.

losses & gains.

I capture what I see,

skin & skulls.

& in this way, I live,

through what I keep in my shoes.

They rub my feet & make me bleed,

& that's part of my story too,

just like the name on the final page,

with sweat slowly dying the paper chartreuse.

The name I wait to hear.

Patiently.

When I hear it,

I'll take out my pencil,

now dwindled to a broken piece of lead,

& open the book.

A tear might distort the name.

Or maybe I'll be numb.

Because that name,

it's the ending of this story,

for better or for worse.

Happy

Jessica Dixon

I watched fireworks last night,
& a spark fell in my eye
incinerating the cornea
while igniting in my a pssion for incendiary warfare
soon after,
I set to work on playing with matches
& touching them to explosive materials
in hopes of creating the perfect BOOM!
I grew desperate,
unable to quench my thirst for pyrotechnics.
I found myself blind,

deaf.

mute

from exposure
yet incapable of ceasing the quest,
until one day,
it happened.
The big one,
By far the Largest,

Loudest.

Longest

blast I'd ever seen,
more magnanimous than even my dreams,
so grand that it gobbled up my home
& devoured my friends.
It vaporized buildings familiar & odd,
humans friendly & strange alike.
Finally,
it came to collect me,
& I took it by the hand.

Нарру

We heart it dot com

Hannah Murphy

Attending this mass of pictures,

Not all of them make sense

Or pertain to my interest.

But every time I'm there,

I look at those photos that make everything beautiful.

I can't help but see them and wish

That I could jump through the fragile screen

And lay in bed with a beautiul man.

A meanigful tattoo on his arm.

And just be

Beside him

And feel ravishingly beautiful

In my skinny jeans and Converse.

Get up and look out into my

Unorganized,

Yet perfectly arranged garden,

To see my artistic friends

Sitting in the middle of it,

Laughing,

Eating happy meals

That could never have come from McDonalds.

And to catch my own reflection and see

That my inner beauty has

Finally

Come to match my outside



It's Not Completely Unfortunate

by Hannah Murphy

The floor quickly darkens, These people disappear. I am utterly alone When something whispers in my ear. "You'll never make it out of here, Why would you even try." I want to turn and face it. But it won't look me in the eye. I stand up from my position And try to turn and run. The beast chuckles from behind me. Why was I the one? He follows me to nowhere And puts his arms around my waist, Turns me around to face him, I am no longer chased. My heart beats from inside me Reminding me to breathe. If I can make it out of here, Then the people will believe. His eyes are green like emeralds, A shocking sight to see, And then he leans into my ear and whispers "Now you can be free." His mouth conforms to mine

and his lips taste like bitter night. And I admit my gentle reader, that I didn't want to fight. My lungs breathe in cold mercury and I reach up to touch his face; then his hands slide down my back and I pray this is the case. I know I'm not his first and that I won't be his last, but right now I don't care and he holds me to him fast. our bodies mingle endlessly, our movements matching tone, and I am strongly craving that I become his own. When we finish I can see him, the light opening his face; we no longer rush through this, our hearts are slow in pace. When he gets up I watch him, as he replaces his own skin. I lick the corners of my mouth and still taste his lips' rushed sin. He puts back on his menace and then removes his hearts. I say to him, I love you. And he says, I'm sorry, but can't play that

part.

Saying Goodbye

by Ariel Wortham

Ode to Pollen

by Emily Kinney

Pollen, pollen in my hair.
Pollen, pollen everywhere.
Pollen, pollen but don't you stare,
Cause then it's in your eye's.

I know I come here every year,

I should be used to it by now

But each time I have to remind myself that I'm saying goodbye,

It's as hard as the last.

I tell myself that this time I'll be strong, that this time it won't be as hard as the time before, But then I recall your sweetness, goodness, tenderness, And it pains me all over again.

Untitled

by Anonymous

I know the goodbye isn't forever,

I know we'll meet again soon,

Lonely and lost, But -

ly aria iost, Du

Oh. this is hard!

Can't figure out which way to go.
Why couldn't I just go straight from the start?

Now, I'm lost without you, no light to see what's ahead.

Scarde. Scared of loneliness, no warm touches or kisses.

Done. Where's the light?

Gone. I'm choking, suffocating; please leave me alone.

Dark. Wait. Don't go. Save me. Help me. Don't let me go.

Who are you?

I don't recognize you. I meant me.

Let's play a game: hide and seek.

Hear my word. Don't stop them.

Let them filter your mind and dance on your soul.

Save me, hear me, fine me,

Help me find my way back to you. To us.

I can't be here anymore; confused.

Just listen to me.

I LOVE YOU CAKE!

(If a diet doesn't mean death then why does it have "die" in it?)

The Magician

by Emily Kinney

We went to a show once

When I was younger.

There was a man there

A man who said he could transform anything.

He could make the old new again.

The bad good again.

The ugly...

Beautiful. I remember the lights.

They were so bright it could almost blind you...

And the sounds of people

Talking,

Carrying on,

Laughing,

Yelling.

As I stepped onto the stage,

"Ladies and Gentlemen!"

He raised his hands high above all others,

"Today we will transform this young lady

Into someone different.

Feast your eyes as her appearance,

Her voice,

Her personality,

And even memories bend to a new mold!"

He put me in a box.

I couldn't hear anything.

Nothing... except:

"With the snap of my fingers...

Witness...

The new you!"

There was a click.

No... a snap.

I wake up

In my clothes

Under my sheets.

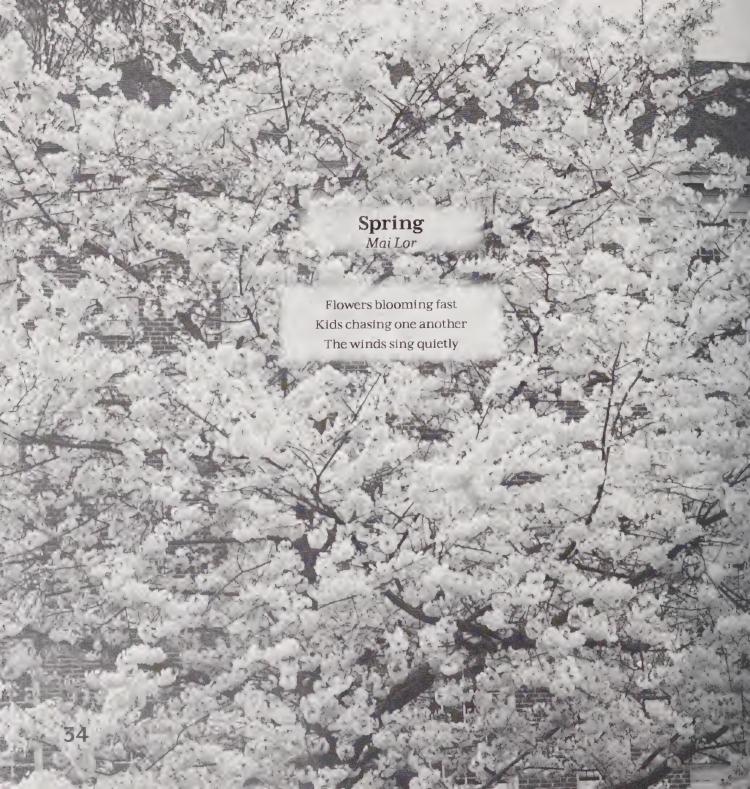
Now you see me...

Now you don't.

paper thin walls

by Sierra Alley

noise
seeps
through the paper thin walls,
between the cracks,
and in the hidden shadows
like
whispers in my ear,
delicate as the morning sun
and in the echoing sound of happiness
spilling
into your heart



Screamin'

Kelsea Bowlin

Can you hear the whole world screamin', 1,000 miles away and there's never any feelin'. how can you go on dreamin', when people are out there bleedin'? How can you question youth? How can you blame things on others and never face the truth? We are all responsible for the world, and we are in control of all our actions, so how's it when the world's bleedin' and 1,000,000's of people are on their knees screamin' how can you ignore the feelings? People dying for never a reason does it hurt you to know, will it kill you show, how can you live if you are just as guilty as us kids? Will you show the world? How will you let them know the things that make it so? Destruction, Defeat, Hatred... Can you hear the whole world screamin', 1,000 miles away and there is never any feeling how can you go on dreamin', when people are out here bleedin'? People dying for never a reason when the worlds bleedin' and people are on their knees screamin' Why won't you stop it? Why can't we stop it?

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